



McGregor W. Scott
United States Attorney
Eastern District of California

Sacramento
501 I. Street, Ste 10-100
Sacramento CA 95814
Tel (916) 554-2700
TTY (916) 554-2855

NEWS RELEASE

Fresno
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401
Fresno, CA 93721
Tel (559) 497-4000
TTY (559) 497-4500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2007

Contact: Karen Escobar, 559-497-4000

www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae

NORTH VALLEY REVERSE DRUG STING NETS \$85,559

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in Fresno indicted MIGUEL ANGEL PANTOJA-BELTRAN, aka Cesar Lorenzo Carmona, 20, FRANCISCO JAVIER ORTIZ-PIEDRA, 26, both of Las Vegas, Nevada, NOE VILLASENOR PIEDRA, 37, and FIDENCIO S. PIEDRA, 25, both of Oakland, CA in connection with their attempt to purchase ten pounds of crystal methamphetamine, a highly addictive and potent form of methamphetamine currently valued at \$9,000 per pound.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Fresno Resident Office.

According to court documents, between March 1, 2007, and April 12, 2007, PANTOJA-BELTRAN negotiated with a confidential informant to purchase ten pounds of crystal methamphetamine for \$90,000. On April 12, all defendants went to meet with the informant in a parking lot in Merced to purchase the drug. VILLASENOR AND FIDENCIO PIEDRA arrived together in a car with the money to buy the drugs. After they showed the informant the money, which was contained in two small coolers in the trunk of the car, they were arrested. PANTOJA-BELTRAN and ORTIZ-PIEDRA, who were in a pickup truck, tried to evade law enforcement agents by fleeing from the area at a high rate of speed, but were apprehended. A search of the car occupied by VILLASENOR and FIDENCIO PIEDRA uncovered a stolen semi-automatic Sig Sauer handgun with a loaded magazine located in the glove box. The coolers contained \$81,000 in cash. VILLASENOR had another \$4,559 in cash in his pocket.

The defendants were indicted for conspiring to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine, attempted possession of methamphetamine, and unlawfully possessing a firearm. All four defendants are illegal aliens from Mexico; under federal law, illegal aliens are prohibited from possessing firearms.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Karen Escobar, who is prosecuting the case, the defendants face a mandatory minimum prison term of ten years and a maximum term of life, along with a maximum fine of \$4 million, for the drug offenses and a maximum prison term of ten years and a fine of \$250,000 for the firearm charge. The charges are only allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The defendants are scheduled for arraignment before a United States Magistrate Judge in Fresno on Friday, April 27, 2007.